

## One giant leap

I'd left home in a hurry, one mid-December afternoon. It had been snowing for days, the drifts renewing themselves every night into immaculate mounds, accumulating under the streetlights. I'd been growing too, and a thaw was on its way.

We had moved in only a week earlier, to this house on a quiet, still-scruffy London street. The old carpets and wallpaper were gone; we lived off takeaways from the Turkish restaurants, planning bookshelves and bathroom tiles, choosing paint shades and baby names.

We threw the hospital bags into the car and left – and then stopped. And inched forward. And stopped, in the slush-hour traffic. We never actually reversed, as my labour seemed to later that night, expanding and contracting time into a substance that went on in all directions, riven by faultlines of pain and sensation.

And then you were there, and here you are now, in my arms as I cross the road, heading for the threshold of our transformed family home. I feel superhuman: you and I, we have performed an overnight miracle. Slippery ice melts beneath my slippered feet and the frozen air sizzles against my body and its tectonic heating.

I negotiate the pavement, eyes caught by bright colour: restaurants' napkins bleeding slowly into the snow. Keep going. Up the path, through the door. "Watch out!" But I am already over the trailing wire. No problem. It's just one small step, baby.